

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NAVAJO WOMAN CONVICTED OF KILLING HER THREE CHILDREN

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on January 17, 2003, Elvira Charley, age 33, of Klagetoh, Arizona, was found guilty by a federal jury in Prescott, Arizona, on all counts in a trial in which she was accused of killing three of her six children by shooting them in the head with a .22 caliber rifle. The jury convicted Charley of three counts of First Degree Murder and three counts of Use of a Firearm During and In Relation to a Crime of Violence.

The evidence at trial showed that on January 1, 2002, at her home in Klagetoh, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, Elvira Charlie used a rifle which she had retrieved from a pawnshop days before to shoot and kill her eleven and eight year-old daughters as they slept in bed. She then shot her eleven year-old son three times before succeeding in killing him. Her first shot grazed his forehead, followed by a second which she fired into his temple, and finally a third shot to the middle of his forehead. The evidence further indicated that Charley then left her surviving children (ages

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8 months, sixteen months, and five years) alone in the home for over two hours with the dead children. Over five hours after the children had been killed, and before calling the police, Elvira Charley called her estranged husband and told him that she had killed their children.

Evidence presented at trial indicated that Elvira Charley repeatedly admitted to killing her children, however, at trial she took the witness stand and told the jury that it was her five year-old son that had killed the three children.

United States Attorney Paul K. Charlton said, “a mother who could, brutally and in cold blood, assassinate three of her own children and then attempt to blame the murders on a fourth child is truly evil. The legal, factual, and emotional issues present in a trial such as this require the finest team of criminal prosecutors. I want to congratulate Assistant United States Attorneys Sharon Smith and Joe Lodge, and those who supported them, for their excellent work on this case, and for making sure that a person such as this is removed from society.”

The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Earl H. Carroll.

A conviction for First Degree Murder carries a mandatory penalty of life imprisonment, a maximum fine of \$250,000, or both. A conviction for Use of a Firearm During and In Relation to a Crime of Violence carries a mandatory penalty of ten years for the first offense, and twenty-five years on each of the next offenses, and a maximum fine of \$250,000 on each count. The firearms sentences must also run consecutively by law to each other and to the other sentences.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by the Navajo Department of Public Safety and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Sentencing is set before Judge Earl H. Carroll on April 7, 2003.

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The prosecution was being handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Sharon Smith and Joe Lodge, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER : CR -02-0081-PCT-EHC
RELEASE NUMBER : 2003-008

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